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ABSTRACT

A mail survey of the directors of Texas adult education cooperatives conducted in 1989 was intended to describe adult education programs in the state to aid in the planning and development of teacher training materials. Forty-two of the 63 directors completed all or part of the survey questionnaire. Among the results were the following: (1) 70 percent of the classes were located in a public school, 19 percent were in learning centers, and 12 percent were in churches; (2) 77 percent of the paid teachers were female and 23 percent were male; (3) the majority of paid teachers in 76 percent of the programs held college degrees and were certified teachers; (4) 56 percent of the adult students were female; (5) 49 percent of the students were Hispanic, 32 percent were Anglo, 14 percent were Black, 2 percent were Asian, and 2 percent were Native American; (6) the most common teaching methods involved the use of commercially produced materials; (7) less than half the teachers had access to audiovisual equipment; (8) only 18 percent of students used computer-aided instruction; (9) standard written and oral assessment tools and informal student assessment tools were used for student placement in classes; and (10) instructional methods included phonics, sight words, language experience, peer tutoring, Laubach methods, and Literary Volunteers of America methods. (CML)

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Report of a Survey of Texas Adult Education Cooperative Directors

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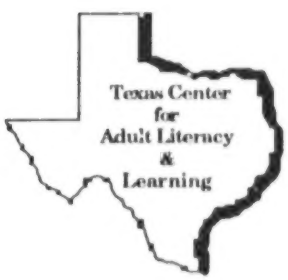

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A Report of a Survey of Texas Adult Education Cooperative Directors

Introduction

On July 12, 1989, the staff of the Adult Learning and Literacy Clearinghouse administered a survey to directors of Texas adult education cooperatives at their summer meeting in Austin, Texas. The purpose of the survey was to acquire information in regard to particular aspects of adult education programs including instructional sites; instructional staff -- paid and volunteer; adult education students; instructional materials; teaching technologies and methodologies; student assessment and evaluation; and teacher training. Forty-two of the sixty-three adult education cooperative directors in Texas were present for the survey and completed all or part of the survey instrument.

The survey was designed to be administered in one conference session and to allow the directors to estimate responses. Although the Clearinghouse staff recognized that these estimates would be less accurate than responses which allowed directors to respond with information drawn directly from program records, it was decided that this method would provide a significantly greater rate of return and insure that all of the responses were based on information gathered at the same time. The directors' responses were, by the nature of the way that the survey was designed, best estimates of conditions in their cooperative of the 1988-89 program year. Further, it was felt that the directors' estimates would yield a reasonable "snapshot" of Texas adult education and provide the Clearinghouse staff with a basis for planning services and research projects. Because the directors were responding in percentages to the majority of the questions and because not all directors answered all questions, the total responses in some categories did not equal 100%.

Instructional Sites

The first subsection of the survey instrument sought information on instructional sites. Directors' reported that 70% of adult education classes offered through the cooperatives were located in a public school. Learning centers accounted for 19%, churches for 12%, and community centers for 11% of the balance of class sites. Many of the cooperatives' service areas extend across municipal or county lines and classes are offered in both rural and urban areas by some cooperatives. Sixty-two percent of the directors responding indicated that their cooperatives offered class in areas with population of more than 10,000, while sixty percent indicated that their cooperatives held classes in areas of less than 10,000 in population.

Teaching Staff

The second part of the survey examined paid and volunteer teaching staff. The directors indicated that 77% of their paid teachers were female and 23% were male. Ethnicity of the paid teachers was 55% Anglo, 34% Hispanic, 10% Black, .6% Asian, .6% Other and .12% Native American.

Seventy-six percent of the directors indicated that the majority of their paid teachers hold a college degree and are certified teachers. Sixty-one percent indicated that their adult education teachers held some kind of college degree. Only 15% indicated that they hired persons with a high school diploma or GED to work as adult education teachers.

The survey results were mixed, but they suggest that the majority of the paid teachers described teach in adult education classes 0-10 hours per week. Approximately 12% of the directors indicated that they had teaching staff that worked in adult education 21-30 hours per week. Thirty-six percent of the directors indicated

that the many of their teachers had been working with their cooperative for 1-3 years and 24% reported significant numbers of teachers with 4-6 years of experience. Thirty-eight percent of the directors reported teachers with more than seven years of experience teaching in the cooperative.

The most effective methods of recruiting adult education teachers were, from most to least prevalent; school contacts, newspaper advertising, community service groups, word-of-mouth, and religious group sources. The most common reason indicated for a paid teacher to resign from an adult education cooperative was family responsibility. Other reasons cited included rate of pay, teacher burnout, required paperwork, the relocation of the teacher to another town, and lack of materials.

Volunteer Teaching Staff

Volunteer staff were described as 74% female and 26% male with 75% of the volunteers Anglo, 17% Hispanic, 5% Black, and .14% Asian. The most useful volunteer recruiting methods in rank order are community service groups, newspaper advertisement, school contacts, flyers (printed announcements), PLUS public service announcements, and local radio public service announcements. The most prevalent reasons for volunteers ending their participation were scheduling, burnout, record keeping, lack of support, frustration, and personal reasons.

Student Population

The third part of the survey described the adult students. The directors indicated that 56% of their adult students are female and 44% are male. Student ethnicity was reported as 49% Hispanic, 32% Anglo, 14% Black, 2% Asian, 2% Native American, and 1% from some other ethnic group. Recruiting methods for adult education students were ranked in the following order; word of mouth, flyers (printed announcements), referrals, newspaper advertising, radio announcements, and PLUS public service announcements.

Materials and Teaching

The fourth portion of the survey sought information on materials and teaching technologies. Directors ranked the types of teaching materials used in adult education classes in the following order: commercially prepared materials, teacher-made materials, resources from the public schools, Laubach materials, and LVA materials. The most commonly listed commercially prepared materials used for ABE/GED classes were published by Steck-Vaughn, Cambridge, and Contemporary, respectively. The most prevalent publishers of commercially prepared materials for ESL instruction included Steck-Vaughn, Laubach, Regents-Dixson, and Regents-LADO.

The most common method for materials selection reported indicated that directors work with their teachers to select commercially prepared material. The material selection criteria listed by the directors were, in order; applicability, cost, availability, and teacher requested. In addition to print media, the directors' indicated that 41% of the teachers had access to audio cassette players, 38% to video cassette players, 37% to overhead projectors, 23% to slide projectors, and 21% to 16mm projectors. The directors indicated that 51% of the adult education teachers utilize the media resources that are available. Audio-visual media are most likely housed in an adult learning center, a regular adult education classroom, or in the cooperative administrative offices.

The most commonly reported type of computer was the Apple IIe, followed by IBM clones, and Tandy. Eighteen percent of the students were reported as using computer-aided instruction systems regularly and 32% of the directors indicated that computers were also used in administrative functions. Twenty-one percent of the directors indicated that they have access to the Electric pages computer network and 8% indicated access to FAX machines.

The directors were asked to rank the teaching methodologies used in their adult education classes. The methods were ranked as

follows: phonics, sight words, language experience, peer tutoring/counseling, Laubach, and LVA methods.

Directors indicated that standard written and oral assessment tools, and informal student assessment tools were all used for student placement in classes, although 30% of the directors reported that combination of these tools were most commonly utilized. Teachers are most likely to administer the student assessment process, with only 13% of the directors stating that a supervisor was responsible for assessment. The most likely determinant of student advancement in a learning program was teacher assessment followed by informal testing, interviews, and student self-assessment.

Teacher Training and Evaluation

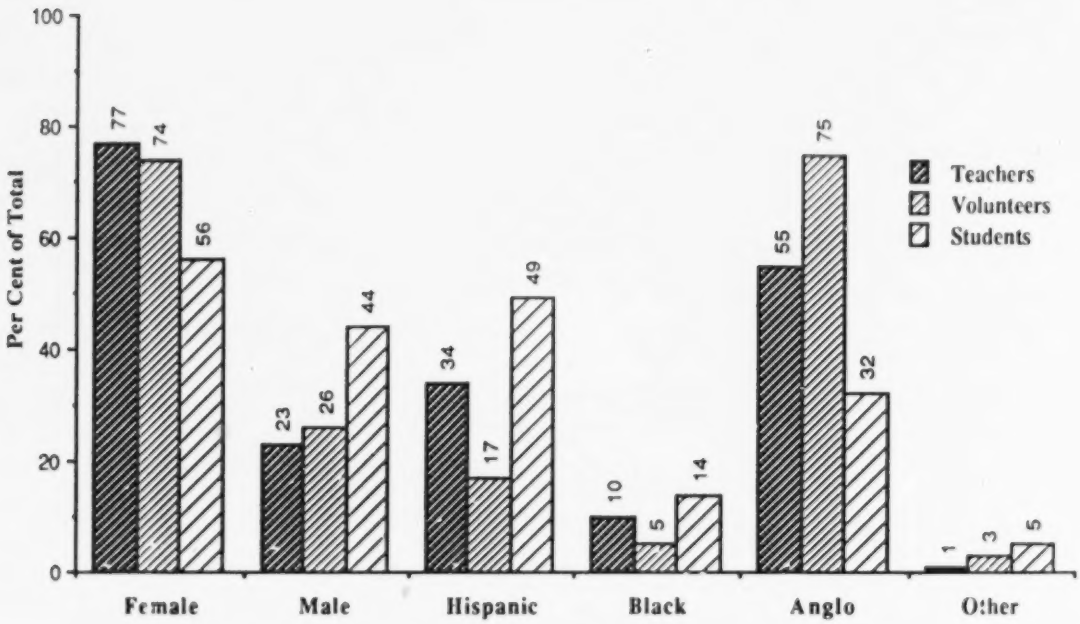
Directors reported that teacher training content is most often determined through a survey of the teachers to determine needs and concerns. Other determinants included director's perception of need, current issues in adult education, mandated changes in adult education requirements, teacher requests, and the availability of a particular consultant. Both new and experienced teachers were reported as being generally satisfied with teacher training. Only 28% of the directors indicated that local teachers were used as inservice trainers. The most prevalent training methods were teacher attendance at cooperative training workshops and regional adult education meetings.

Teacher performance criteria were ranked in the following order: student evaluations, inservice attendance, student progress, and student retention rates.

Summary

From the reports of the directors, it appears that much of the adult education offered by cooperatives in Texas is taught in public school buildings. Nineteen percent of adult education cooperative classes were reported to be taught in adult learning centers.

Figure 1. A comparisons of adult education teachers, volunteers, and students by gender and ethnicity.



The majority of adult education classes are taught by teacher-certified Anglo females with the majority of all teachers holding college degrees and most holding teacher certification. The largest percentage of students are female and Hispanic. It appears that statewide very few Blacks are currently enrolled in adult education programs as compared with Anglo and Hispanic groups. The proportion of male students exceeds that of male teachers and very few males volunteer in adult education programs. The greatest concentrations of Hispanic students are in south and west Texas with greater numbers of Black students reported in northeast and east Texas. Figure 1 (above) graphically illustrates the composition of the teacher, volunteer, and student populations for the state.

The most common teaching methods reported involve the use of commercially prepared materials. Only slightly over one-half of adult education teachers have access to audiovisual equipment and

very few adult students have access to computer-assisted learning technologies. Teacher preparation takes place in large groups using resources from outside the cooperatives as training content. Student assessment and decisions about the student's progress are made, in the most part, by the classroom teachers.

This survey provides a brief composite view of adult education teachers and students in the Texas cooperative system. Although the survey method places some limitations on the results, the information gathered in this study will be useful in a variety of ways.

The results of this survey will be used by the Clearinghouse staff for planning and for developing teacher training materials. The picture that the survey portrays of Texas adult education teachers and students has particular implications for activities involving selection of curriculum materials. In addition, in the 1989 Spring semester, the Clearinghouse staff received funding from the Texas A&M College of Education to conduct a needs analysis pertaining to the need for multicultural sensitivity training for adult educators in Texas. This results of the multicultural needs assessment and the survey described in this report will be used to prepare a proposal to develop and field test teacher training materials to be used in Texas.

The following section reports portions of the survey data as it reflects conditions in five regions of the state. It is interesting to note how the percentages of teachers, volunteers, and students vary by geographic area of the state. These figures also are one indication of how diverse adult education programs are in Texas and how the needs of programs in one region can be very different from those of another region.

Regional Profiles

Texas adult education cooperative directors were asked to identify their cooperatives according to the regions indicated in the graphic above. Comparing this information yielded the following insights about the adult education cooperatives:

- Paid and volunteer instructional staff throughout the regions were described as predominantly female with a range of 76% to 94% for teachers and 78% to 90% for volunteers. The only exception was Region 5 which reported 60% male volunteers.

- Instructional staff is predominantly Anglo throughout the regions with a range of 51% to 76% for teachers and 73% to 90% for volunteers.

- Students were reported as predominantly female (range= 53% to 59%). Hispanic students were in the majority in Regions 4 (72%) and 5 (73%). Anglo students were in the majority in Region 3 (51%). Black student enrollment ranged from 2% in Region 4 to 24% in Region 2.

- Regions 2 (77%), 4 (65%), and 5 (70%) reported that the majority of their classes were offered in areas with populations of over 10,000. Regions 1 (53%) and 3 (55%) reported that a majority of classes were offered in population areas of less than 10,000.

By grouping the director's responses, regional profiles were developed. The following describes each region's instructional staff, student population, and teaching sites:

Region 1

1. The teacher population of Region 1 is 94% female and 6% male. The teachers ethnicity was reported as 66% Anglo, 32% Hispanic, and 2% Black.
2. Volunteers were reported as 90% female and 10% male. The ethnicity of the volunteers was 83% Anglo and 17% Hispanic.
3. The student population was 53% female and 47% male. The percentage representation of ethnic groups was 38% Anglo, 38% Hispanic, 12% Black, 10% Native American and 3% Asian.
4. Directors reported that 53 of adult education classes are held in areas with populations of less than 10,000 and 26% of the classes are held in areas with populations of above 10,000.

Region 2

1. The teacher population of Region 2 is 70% female and 30% male. The teachers ethnicity was reported as 76% Anglo,12% Black, 11% Hispanic, and .55% from another ethnic group.
2. Volunteers were reported as 72% female and 28% male. The ethnicity of the volunteers was 73% Anglo and 12% Hispanic.
3. The student population was 59% female and 40% male. The percentage representation of ethnic groups was 46% Anglo, 28% Hispanic, 24% Black, 2% Asian and 0.2% of other ethnic groups.

4. Directors reported that 23% of adult education classes are held in areas with populations of less than 10,000 and 77% of the classes are held in areas with populations of above 10,000.

Region 3

1. The teacher population of Region 3 is 767% female and 23% male. The teachers ethnicity was reported as 51% Anglo, 31% Hispanic, 16% Black, 1% Native American, and 1% of some other ethnic group.
2. Volunteers were reported as 80% female and 20% male. The ethnicity of the volunteers was 84% Anglo, 10% Hispanic, 4% Black, and .45% Asian.
3. The student population was 57% female and 43% male. The percentage representation of ethnic groups was 51% Hispanic, 26% Anglo, 17% Black, 3% Asian, and 2% of some other ethnicity.
4. Directors reported that 55% of adult education classes are held in areas with populations of less than 10,000 and 45% of the classes are held in areas with populations of above 10,000.

Region 4

1. The teacher population of Region 4 is 76% female and 24% male. The teachers ethnicity was reported as 64% Hispanic, 33% Anglo, 2% Black, 0.25% Asian, and 0.25% Native American.
2. Volunteers were reported as 76% female and 24% male. The ethnicity of the volunteers was 67% Anglo 32% Hispanic, and 1% Black.
3. The student population was 53% female and 47% male. The percentage representation of ethnic groups was 72% Hispanic, 22% Anglo, 2% Black, and 1% of some other ethnicity.
4. Directors reported that 35% of adult education classes are held in areas with populations of less than 10,000 and 65% of the classes are held in areas with populations of above 10,000.

Region 5

1. The teacher population of Region 5 is 78% female and 22% male. The teachers ethnicity was reported as 60% Anglo, 30% Hispanic, and 2% Black.
2. Volunteers were reported as 40% female and 60% male. The ethnicity of the volunteers was 90% Anglo and 10% Hispanic.
3. The student population was 58% female and 42% male. The percentage representation of ethnic groups was 73% Hispanic, 22% Anglo, 4% Black, and 1% Asian.
4. Directors reported that 30% of adult education classes are held in areas with populations of less than 10,000 and 70% of the classes are held in areas with populations of above 10,000.